

Concord Dog Park Feasibility Study Committee Meeting
February 13, 2018

Attendees:

Susanne Jarnryd
Tom McKean
Deborah Richardson
Don Shobrys
Kate Stout
Jeff Young
Anne Umphrey
Bob Schulman
Guest: Kate Hodges

The meeting began at 5:35

The minutes for the meeting of 1/31/2018 were unanimously approved.

Kate Hodges, the Assistant Town Manager, explained the vocabulary associated with recreation and recreational facilities. Recreation is anything that has you out and exerting effort. Open space is space that is open and unencumbered with no barriers in place and a clean line of site. This textbook definition is from several decades ago and some communities may have modified it. Open space is not dedicated to single use. Mixed use usually refers to a combination of active space and passive space, or passive space and open space.

Boxborough has mixed use recreational space at Flerra Meadows with playing fields, trails, and dog access. Perkins School for the Blind has a mixed use field that is open with no fencing and a playground in the middle. Emerson Park is considered an active use facility. The Wheeler-Harrington House is an example of mixed use space that includes historical, conservation, and passive uses.

The National Park and Recreation Association provides definitions for active and passive recreation, although communities can modify those definitions. Passive outdoor recreation requires little or no facilities or development with minimal environmental impact, although you can add new trails and gravel surfaces. Most parks are considered active recreation as is the Rail Trail. Horseback riding is considered active recreation. Universal design means anyone can access any part of the facility, and is more comprehensive than the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Kate Hodges gave the committee articles on dog parks in Ann Arbor, Michigan and Montgomery County, Maryland; Top Trends in Parks and Recreation for 2018 (which includes using digestors to convert dog waste to electricity); and a list of dog park suppliers.

She asked whether we are looking for a large unleashed area or a smaller facility with amenities. We shared the charge to committee with her along with the results from the survey of over 600 dog owners. We also noted that we have to assess community interest.

She suggested we start by selecting a parcel as a test case and then drilling into specific potential uses. The committee pointed out that some communities start the process of selecting a location by looking for an expression of community support. There was also the concern that the test case might be viewed as a selected site. An alternative suggestion was to pick 5 representative parcels as test cases and look at how they could be utilized. Emerson Park and Willow Guzzle were suggested as 2 of the 5 sites.

She suggested we speak with Ryan Kane of the Recreation Department and Concord Facilities Manager Ryan Orr. She also suggested we look at parcels owned by the Concord Municipal Light Plant.

She noted that any community can designate an activity as passive recreation. We asked if the committee could define dog walking as a passive recreation. She will think about it and get back to us.

We thanked her for her help, and look forward to the next time she meets with us.

Susanne offered to review town parcels and identify relevant test cases, using the list of amenities in the document attached to the minutes of our meeting of 1/31/2018 as selection criteria. Committee members noted the importance of getting an accurate assessment of costs as part of determining feasibility. Jeff offered to research sources of cost data. Kate Stout mentioned municipal projects as a source of cost data. Don mentioned commercial construction cost guides.

The conversation then moved to administrative items. Tom announced that the Committee's tenure was extended to 12/31/2018. We decided to move our first public hearing to May 22. Harvey Wheeler was suggested as the location. Anne will follow up with the Town on securing the meeting site.

Our next two meetings will be March 7 and March 21 at 5:30. We will invite Ryan Kane, and Susanne and Jeff will provide updates on test cases and costs. Don will follow up with Town staff to arrange to the ability to project the GIS for Suzanne's presentation.

All present voted to adjourn at 7:05.